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ABSTRACT

This paper traces twentieth-century Unitarian Universalism to its nineteenth-century transcendentalist roots by examining the communication patterns and philosophies of its proponents. Advocates of Unitarianism defend their religious/humanistic philosophy in terms of the Constitution's First Amendment rights to freedom of speech, reflecting their view that human dignity, knowledge, and understanding depend on the constant search for truth and meaning in life and necessitate religious tolerance and candid interaction among all members of society. The writings and sermons of several proponents of Unitarianism are discussed, but the paper concludes that further investigations of twentieth-century Unitarian sermons are necessary in order to better understand and appreciate Unitarianism's rhetorical and religious significance. (RL)

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UNITARIANISM AS A RHETORICAL MOVEMENT

by

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UNITARIANISM AS A RHETORICAL MOVEMENT

Colonial New Englanders who inaugurated a wilderness experiment upon this North American continent inherited an important opportunity to conceptualise, proclaim, and practice the First Amendment freedoms. Thomas Paine's second section of The Rights of Man emerged from the printing presses during 1792, emphasizing that no beginnings for humankind's reformation could commence in Asia, Africa, or Europe. The Declaration of Independence declared colonial independence, but statesmen such as John Adams recognised that the real American revolution happened within thinking minds. The Constitution established a governmental framework through which heretical Unitarian clergy inspired an authentic American persuasion. The dissident movement stimulated by Channing, Emerson, and Parker provided a perspective which spread through mainstream denominations, emerged outside the traditional ecclesiastical establishment, and remained an independent Unitarian movement challenged from within by New England Transcendentalism.

Employing First Amendment freedoms to instigate an American religious revolution, Channing, Emerson, and Parker championed a distinctive ethos which provided an epistemological stance, a political-religious philosophy, and a methodology for creating and conducting human institutions. Pondering the ultimate source of knowledge and authority in theological speculation, Unitarians asserted the primacy of reason, Transcendentalists became mystical, and both contingencies renounced arbitrary separation between the "sacred" and the "secular".

Wilbur dated the distinct separate existence of the American liberal movement from 1815 and contended that during the first century, the movement passed through five specific phases, each of which is represented by an epoch-marking speech.[1] Wright confirmed that Channing's Baltimore sermon, Emerson's Divinity School address, and Parkers South Boston sermon are accepted as the three classis statements of American Unitarianism.[2] Manschreck maintained that although Unitarianism was linked with the American liberal religious movement, Unitarianism stemmed more from the rationalism characterized by the European Enlightenment.[3] According to Mead, except for the Unitarians, American Protestantism renounded Enlightment rationalism and thereby became either indifferent to or actively opposed against the general spirit and intellectual currents which pervade modern Western civilization.[4]

Born in Newport, Rhode Island, on April 7, 1780, Channing completed his Harvard undergraduate education in 1798, taught for two years in Virginia, and became a Harvard regent during 1801. Studying Christianity critically, Channing attempted to discern Jesus' actual teaching from subsequent theological distortions. William Ellery Channing became pastor of Federal Street Church, Boston, during 1803. Although Channing's association with Unitarians was distant and he considered himself "little of a Unitarian", his sermon "Unitarian Christianity" crystalized American Unitarianism into a specific statement. Powerfully Channing described independent inquiry and First Amendment freedoms in his 1830 election sermon:

> I call that mind free which jealously guards its intellectual rights and powers, which calls no man master, which does not content itself with a passive or hereditary faith, which opens itself to light whencesoever it may come, which receives new truth as an angel from heaven, which, whilst consulting others, inquires still more of the oracle within itself, and uses instructions from abroad not to supersede but to quicken and exalt its own energies.5

While Channing seems less Transcendentalist when compared with Emerson and Parker,[6] Channing nurtured an individualistic rationalism[7] and admonished his countrymen,

in Parker's words, that "institutions do not always make us more free, but weave webs of conventionalism about us, belittling the might of man."[8]

Emerson, who was born in Boston on May 25, 1803, was the son of a Unitarian minister. Emerson prepared for the ministry, studying Greek with Edward Everett and rhetoric under Edward Channing. He secured his Harvard AB during 1821 and studied in Harvard Divinity School between 1823 and 1826. Emerson was ordained as assistant pastor of Boston's Second Church in 1829; but he resigned during 1832 when he refused to participate in the Holy Communion. Instead Emerson settled in Concord in 1834 and discovered himself surrounded by heretical Transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Bronson Alcott. Emerson's essay, "Nature", is considered the most significant statement of Transcendentalism; Goddard concluded that "Nature" "comes nearer perhaps than anything else to being the philosophical 'constitution' of transcendentalism."[9]

Emerson's collected writings contain a seminal statement summarizing his Transcendentalist philosophy. Emerson contended that the phenomenonal world is the empirically discernible manifestation from that spirituality from which everything emerges.[10] Humans can experience that Transcendental Unification through immediate intuition.[11] Man's contemplative consciousness which manifests as unindividualized and depersonalized awareness constitutes direct intercourse with all.[12] Man as a magnificent embodiment seemingly contains the precious potential of everything. "The history of the genesis or the old mythology," Emerson said, "repeats itself in the experience of every child."[13] The immediacy of illuminating religious experience, not the supremacy of sacred scriptures or ordained priesthoods, was attested by his assertion: "It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake."[14] Emerson

renounced institutional idolatry:

> Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation, the act of thought, is transferred to the record. The poet chanting was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit: henceforward it is settled the book is perfect; as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly the book becomes noxious; the guide is a tyrant. 15

Emerson appreciated Jesus an an extremely significant example of man united through consciousness with that spirituality which undergirds phenomenonal reality, a unified relatedness established through immediate intuition:

> Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul. Drawn by its severe harmony, ravished with its beauty, he lived in it, and had his being there. Alone in all history he estimated the greatness of man. One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his World. He said, in this jubilee of sublime emotion, "I am divine. Through me, God acts; through me, speaks. Would you see God, see me; or see thee; when thou also thinkest as I now think."16

Theodore Parker was impressed deeply by Emerson's Divinity School address, although Emerson was not invited to return to that Cambridge campus for thirty years following his controversial commencement address. In 1830 twenty-year old Parker walked to Cambridge, passed the Harvard entrance examinations, and was enrolled although this self-educated scholar could not pay the fees. Parker was awarded an honorary masters degree during 1840. He entered Harvard Divinity School in April, 1834 and graduated in July, 1836. During his Harvard years, Parker considered the scriptures as divinely inspired, accepted revelation as evidenced with miracles, and acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God. Following the presentation of Emerson's address, Parker published a pamphlet contending that intuition renders external evidence unnecessary.

Through preaching Parker challenged Unitarianism with Transcendentalism. Parker's "The Transient And Permanent In Christianity" preached in Boston's Hawes Place Church in 1841 affirmed two elements within Christianity. The transient

is "the thought, the folly, the uncertain wisdom, the theological notions, the impiety of man."[17] The permanent is "absolute, pure morality; absolute, pure religion; the love of man, the love of God acting without let or hindrance."[18] Recognizing that "heresy of one age is the orthodox belief and 'only infallible rule' of the next"[19], Parker employed the First Amendment freedoms to defend an uncompromised and unimpeachible intellectual integrity:

> Terror has sometimes palsied tongues that, before, were eloquent as the voice of persuasion....You may hire your servants to preach as you bid; to spare your vices, and flatter your follies; to prophesy smooth things, and say, It is peace, when there is no peace. Yet in so doing you weaken and enthral yourselves. And alas for the man who consents to think one thing in his closet and preach another in his pulpit! [20]

He emphasized, "Christianity is not a system of doctrines, but rather a method for attaining oneness with God."[21]

Parker became a storm-center generating theological controversy. When his Unitarian colleagues asked for his resignation in 1843, he refused. Denials of the customary pulpit exchanges followed. Regulations which governed lectures in Boston's First Church were revised, excluding Parker from participation. While clergymen criticized him, Parker gained support from laymen who encouraged his lecture series, A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion. In December, 1845, Boston gentlemen resolved that Parker would be heard. In January, he resigned his West Roxbury ministry and became the pastor serving the newly organized Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society which assembled in Boston's Music Hall. In his 1845 installation sermon, Parker proclaimed:

> The church that is to lead this century will not be a church creeping on all fours; mewling and whining, its face turned down, its eyes turned back. It must be full of the brave, manly spirit of the day, keeping also the good of times past....But the church which did for the fifth century, or the fifteenth, will not do for this....
>
> A church that believes in inspiration now will appeal to God; try things by reason and conscience; aim to surpass the old heroes; baptize its children with a new spirit, and using the present age will lead public opinion, and not follow it.[22]

Employing the First Amendment freedoms to preach a persuasion called "heretical", Parker introduced German higher criticism into American theological scholarship, encouraged liberal religion by speaking across America, applied his religious convictions to contemporary social problems thereby anticipating the social gospel movement, and asserted Transcendental intuition as the ultimate source of knowledge and authority in theological speculation.

The religious movement nurtured by Channing, Emerson, and Parker developed when eighteenth-century New England Congregationalism became strained by an emergent rational Unitarianism which subsequently provoked a more mystical Transcendentalism.[23] New England Transcendentalists who criticized Unitarianism formulated a synthesis which regarded genuine religion as universal spiritual experience. Unfortunately the epistemological distinctiveness which characterized Transcendentalism restricted dialectical enjoinment with the rational Unitarians because each competing contingency assumed referents in different conceptions about phenomenonal reality.

Estrangement of Channing, Emerson, and Parker grew as traditional Unitarians remained "disquieted by mysticism, enthusiasm and rapture."[24] Goddard concluded that if Channing were a Unitarian, he constituted an entirely new type; for the continuity of Unitarian development appears broken; indeed, Channing appears scarcely a Unitarian but rather the first of the Transcendentalists.[25] This discontinuity between the Unitarians and the Transcendentalists is represented by the resignations of Emerson and Ripley from their Unitarian ministeries, Brownson's post-Unitarian ministry through his Society for Christian Unity, and Parker's near excommunication from his Bostonian brothers.[26]

While these heretical Transcendentalists never developed an enduring organization for the continuing proclamation of their religious philosophy, the contemporary liberal movement stems from Channing, Emerson, and Parker.

As a contemporary movement growing from eighteenth-century liberal religion, twentieth-century Unitarian Universalism (since the denominational merger in 1960) constitutes an unconventional minority in which members celebrate humanity's traditional world religions,[27] assert the primacy of freethought,[28] or abandon man's centuries-old historical heritage to construct a universal secular humanism.[29] Movement membership approaches one-tenth of one percent of the national religious population. Willingness to break from encumbering ecclesiastical traditions, knowledgeable about new insights and information, and concern for living creatively and courageously within the existential here-and-now: these characteristics identify a growing constituency.[30] More than dissent from orthodoxy, the movement exerts an influence which Marshall observed:

> Our movement from its inception has sought to be more than a sectarian church....Indeed, it was Channing's hope and that of many other religious liberals of his time that it would not be necessary to form a new church, a new denomination.
>
> They hoped to influence existing churches by reason, so that all religions would remove the barriers raised by their creeds and receive into fellowship all who sought the good life.[31]

While Channing, Emerson, and Parker sought the removal of exigencies within eighteenth-century New England Unitarianism by nurturing Transcendentalism, their successors avow that religion must grow beyond narrow exclusiveness toward a universal humanism.[32] Professing no absolute "truth" or ultimate "reality", many Unitarian Universalists simply practice their "one world faith" by supporting the United Nations or world federalism. Most prefer that their denomination move closer to a secular, universal, humanistic movement beyond the eccumenical movement within Protestant Christianity.[33] Their refusal to "affirm Jesus" divinity" prompted their exclusion from the National Council of Churches.

As a movement Unitarian Universalism provides a purposeful philosophy for a heretical minority which represents a fascinating unorthodox subculture.

"What we want is a movement, more than an institution," former UUA president Greeley contended, "a movement inspired by a vision and supported by a commitment equal to the future."[34] "We are believers," minister Mendelsohn argued, "but our beliefs are centered in a method, a process of the religious life, rather than in closed articles of faith."[35] While Protestant Christianity accepts Biblical scriptures as ultimate knowledge and authority in theological speculation, the Unitarian Universalist seeks growing meaning from humankind's accumulated knowledge, experience, and understanding.[36] Asserting the individual intellectual freedom guaranteed through the First Amendment freedoms, they repudiate orthodoxy:

> Unitarians and Universalists reject the doctrine of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the belief in supernatural Miracles, the concept of election as the means of salvation, the concept of Hell as a place to which the dead go to be punished, and, of course, the concept of Purgatory....
>
> Unitarians and Universalists, let it be said clearly, have given up the necessity to accept orthodox beliefs in Revelation, Miracles, Immaculate Conception, Bodily Resurrection, and Salvation, but we have not given up believing.37

Mendelsohn attempted this self-identification:

> We find ourselves, then, possessors of a tradition with these three interwoven strands: a Biblically-centered faith subject to the authority of Reason; a Romantic or Transcendentalist faith which couples warm, intuitional spirituality with strong rational, ethical and moral emphases; and a faith rooted in naturalistic scientific empiricism....
>
> The basic principles to which all three appeal are unrestricted freedom of inquiry in religious thought and opinion, unrestricted freedom of self-government as congregations or religious communities, and unrestricted freedom from authoritative tests as to what constitutes genuine Unitarianism.38

Refuting a suspecion that Unitarian Universalists believe nothing, some simply say, "Man is a rational being, who possesses the power to respond intelligently to the forces that surround him,"[39] while others quietly revere the supreme significance of human personality.[40]

Unitarian Universalists require no confessional conformity but the appeal is directed towards highly educated persons who hold an elevated social status.

Recently the UUA Goals Committee disclosed that sixty-two percent of their members earned more than $10,000 annual income; sixty percent possess college degrees while twenty-five percent have graduate degrees; and sixty-five percent are employed in the professions.[41] Thereupon the Committee on Liberal Religious Thought and Dialogue became apprehensive that "Unitarian-Universalist churches have in fact engendered a class-oriented denomination."[42]

Maintaining their movement requires effective communication. "We are recognizing anew," Greeley stated, "how necessary it is that a continual dialogue go on within our own household of faith."[43] "I am persuaded," minister Fritchman concluded, "that the encouragement of responsible dialogue is the basic goal of our religion, a dialogue which assists us and our congregations to discover meaning and a program for man while he is yet alive on this fertile, glorious earth."[44] As a sustained life-of-dialogue, Unitarian Universalism reflects the realization that myths, symbols, and rituals can facilitate the communication of religious "truths"; that differences between poetic-emotive and scientific languages should not provoke communication breakdown or theological misunderstanding; and that the creative arts provide unique communication possibilities for a relevant worship which is described as "the celebration of life."

From the heretical ministeries of Channing, Emerson, and Parker extends a procession of eloquent preachers who have proclaimed the Unitarian Universalist persuasion by employing the First Amendement freedoms. Some seem inspired by an enduring perspective of beauty which minister Howlett described:

> Beholding such loveliness, feeling more than understanding its meaning, like the inquirer who stands before unfolding truth, you would speak, but no words come, for no words can serve your purpose. Then a Name rises to your lips, an ancient name, a name as old as man. And so you speak the Name, not knowing quite what you have said or why you have said it. But you have known what man has always known when he has come close to the infinite and the eternal - that he must speak of it. 45

This movement which champions "the free mind" secured powerful expression through such twentieth-century Unitarian preachers as A. Powell Davies who served All Souls Church in Washington, John Haynes Holmes who transformed the Community Church of New York, and W. Waldemar W. Argow who ministered in Baltimore.

A son of Welsh nonconformist parents, Davies was born in Birkenhead, England, on June 5, 1902. He attended Liverpool schooling and graduated from Richmond College, the University of London, before emigrating to the United States in 1928. Davies served two small Maine congregations while attending Boston University. He was the minister at Pine Street Church in Portland, Maine, attending this Methodist congregation, before moving to the Community Church in Summit, New Jersey. When Davies commenced his prominent ministry at All Souls during 1944, he sought a consistency between American religious practice and American political philosophy.

As a controversial Unitarian clergymen, Davies emphasized that "a new faith, intrinsic to human life itself is now emerging. In some ways, it is no more new than old - the oldest of all the higher faith - and at any time the surest and deepest."[46] Davies contended that First Amendment political freedom grows from religious liberty:

> Liberalism is that which liberates. Its object is to losen bondage, whether of the mind or of the person, whether of individuals or societies, and its motivation is the faith that human life can only reach its fullest stature through continuous liberation - through the struggle to be free. 47

Davies taught that America's authentic religion is the high ethical persuasion which motivated the colonial founding fathers who realized that the unorthodoxy of Thomas Jefferson signaled the termination of traditional fear-based religion. This American faith which was sometimes misinterpreted as anti-Christian and misrepresented as atheistic, according to Davies, encourages intellectual freedom, tenacious searching for truth, unimpeachible ethical commitment, profound respect

for human rights and civil liberties, undaunted affirmation of human potentiality, and reverent humility before "the ultimate Mystery which some of them revered in silence and others named as God."[48]

Within the heretical traditions of Channing, Emerson, and Parker, this British-born convert to Unitarianism espoused a thoughtful universal persuasion. Davies asked: "Is it an immensity of space that has significance or the mind that contemplates it? Is it the fire of distant suns or the flame of inner life?"[49] Through preaching and writing Davies championed a liberating universal religion which encouraged thinking minds to transcend divisive doctrines:

> When I read Amos and Jeremiah, I say, "Would to God I were a Jew." When I read the Parable of the Good Samaritan, I say, "Would I were a Galilean." When I read the 13th of 1st Corinthians, I wish with all my heart that I might be a Christian after the manner of the Apostle, Paul. When I think of Buddha and his Eight-fold Path, I say, "I, too, would be a Buddhist." And when I remember the Trial of Socrates, I wish that I might be so brave a humanist. So that at the end, there is nothing I can say but that, like Emerson and Channing, I want to live with the privilege of the illimitable mind. 50

Respecting diverse religions with an appreciation richer than passive tolerance, Davies fostered a universal brotherhood wider than the eccumenical movement and broader than current Protestant-Catholic dialogue. Davies wanted a nondogmatic church:

> But what a pity it is! That any church anywhere should be disfigured by a barrier of reservations, a fence of authoritarian requirements, a wall of creed and dogma!...What is a church but truth sifted painfully from error, good saved from evil, beauty cleansed from the world's pollution, peace in the midst of tumult? 51

Cherishing the historic witness of heroic heretics, Davies reminded his congregations that nonconformists envisioned social progress and bequeathed the beginnings of law, renounced human sacrifice and barbaric rituals for a growing humanism, and challenged ignorance and superstition by developing experimental science.[52] Jesus represented the courageous nonconformist who challenges conventional beliefs.

Another titan was John Haynes Holmes. Born November 29, 1879 into a Bostonian family, Holmes entered Harvard during September, 1898, completed his undergraduate degree summa cum laude, and finished his formal education at Harvard Divinity School. In 1904 Holmes was installed as minister of the Third Religious Society and the Third Congregational Church in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Three years later a call brought him to the Church of the Messiah in New York.

A socialist and a pacifist, Holmes exerted considerable independence when he stood virtually alone against mounting pressures and denounced American participation in World War I. Holmes said during his sermon on April 3, 1917:

> How shall I, a pacifist, serve my country in a time of war?
> When hostilities begin, it is universally assumed that there is but a single service which a loyal citizen can render to the state - that of bearing arms and killing the enemy. Will you understand me if I say, humbly and regretfully, that this I cannot, and will not, do. If any man or boy in this church answers the call to arms, I shall bless him as he marches to the front. When he lies in the trenches, or watches on the lonely sentinel post, or fights in the charge, I shall follow him with my prayers. If he is brought back dead from hospital or battlefield, I shall bury him with all the honors, not of war but of religion. He will have obeyed his conscience and thus performed his whole duty as a man....
> But so long as I am priest, this altar shall be consecrated to human brotherhood, and before it shall be offered worship only to that One God and Father of us all...53

From reverence toward the mysterious unknown universe grew Holmes' concept of religion as a philosophy which supports the human quest. Considering humanity's centuries-old pilgrimage toward fuller understanding, he pondered human nobility:

> Valiant is the heart of man. Set in a world whose bounds he cannot trace - armed with puny hands and brain, to do battle against the gigantic forces of sky and earth and sea...man has stood erect as one lifted by God's hand, and has moved ever onward, through centuries of unspeakable pain, fear and frustration, with unconquerable courage and unquenchable faith.54

Holmes stressed humility, open-mindedness, tolerance, freedom, obedience to inner authority, devotion to principle, and humanitarianism. He affirmed "the free mind":

> Liberalism begins with humility of spirit. The true liberal matches himself against the vastness of the world, and recognizes how little he can hope to know of the secrets of reality....Truth is not a treasure that has been found, but a treasure that is being sought. It is not so many diamonds, hard and cold and perfect, but a growing plant beset by weeds and pests...he believes in the people, in their divinity of nature and in their liberty of action. 55

Utilizing the First Amendment freedoms, Holmes defended unpopular causes, battled man's enslavement by racial prejudice and world war, and maintained freedom for his pulpit. Holmes attempted to close the gap between "secular" and "sacred" knowledge and to bridge the gulf between affairs of the church and activities of the world.[56] "The distinctive feature of liberal religion," Holmes stated, "is its emancipation from creeds and dogmas, and its acceptance of reason as a guide to truth."[57]

> For the liberal recognizes no authority save that of thought applied to reality. Popes and commissars, ecclesiastical councils and party conventions - what are these as compared with the majesty of the single mind? What degradation is worse than the subjection of this mind to some official, or conclave, or conqueror, clothed upon with a little brief authority? 58

Neither articles of religion nor authority from creeds should supersede the testimony from the thinking, inquiring mind. For John Haynes Holmes, and for A. Powell Davies and W. Waldemar W. Argow, growing insight into truth remained a primary goal of humankind's pilgrimage toward the unknown, uncertain, and undiscovered.

W. Waldemar W. Argow was born in Dayton, Ohio, on August 9, 189. His father, a Baptist minister who spoke seven languages and who had studied at the University of Jena, was the fourth in five consecutive generations of ministers. Young Argow lived in Louisville, Kentucky, where his father served; graduated there from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1913; and commenced his ministry at Lorain, Ohio, one year later. Five years after that, Argow accepted a teaching position with the Twenty-third Street YMCA in New York City. Between 1921 and 1930, Argow served the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Universalist church; he ministered at the

May Memorial Unitarian Church in Syracuse from 1930 until 1941; and he ended his ministry with nineteen years as minister of the Unitarian Church in Baltimore.

With a poetic command of English, Argow composed numerous prose-poems which were collected in a small book entitled Beyond and published eventually as the 1941 Unitarian lenten manual. Representative is "Religion":

> Older than the home is the Temple; older than the work bench is the Altar; older than the sword is the Sacrificial Fagot; older than the soldier is the Priest; older than written language is the Spoken Prayer; older than painting is the image of a Nameless One. Religion is the first and the last. It is the universal language of all human hearts. Though different forms may be employed to visualize that Something which hides beyond, behind and within the passing flux of things, yet is the desire of each man the same. Though different languages and symbols may be used to describe the passing show, yet the hearts of all men speak a common language. Though temperaments differ, yet are we dedicated to one august destiny and united in one common quest. Ever the vision leads on, sometimes with many gods, sometimes with one; sometimes with many saviours, sometimes with one; sometimes with a holy land washed by ocean waters, sometimes with holy lands implanted in men's hearts. Because we are nobly human we shall ever build our altars, offer our prayers, sing our hymns, bend our knees and fling our aspirations out to kiss the stars. But more and more shall we learn to feel that beneath all our variations abides an Eternal Unity which makes us children of one great love and therefore brothers of one another. 61

Such liberal religion constitutes a consecration inspired by love and guided by reason and a commitment through which human life becomes dedicated to ends beyond one's self.[62] Liberal religion ponders "the divinity suffused in the heart of life amid the commonplace experiences of the immediate lives we live."[63] Argow said:

> The distinctive purpose of a rational, liberal religion is to make man feel at home in this world of ours, to make him feel that he sprang from its loins, that he is here a part of the earth itself, and is no transient visitor, no interloper, no temporary citizen; he has sprung from the heart of life with God as his father and earth as his mother.64

Recognising that "life which throbs in us is the same life that incarnated itself in the lowest forms of an ancient day,"[65] Argow reasoned that this unbroken life

> goes back through not only what we call modern civilized man, but back through primitive man to his common ancestors out of whom primitive man came, back and back and back to the heart of God, out of which all life has sprung.66

Argow affirmed the oneness of life within the living universe:

> As the result of man's honest, conscientious, devoted investigation and the facts he has discovered, he has come to believe that this universe, our earth and everything in it and on it, after long millennia has evolved by a thrust and at the behest of the great Creative Spitit, God, and that these things which comprise the outer stellar universe, as well as our own earth, began from very simple and lowly beginnings, and that the universe as a whole is a <u>living</u> universe. 67

Within the evolutionary development, each person's mind is part of a greater universal mind.[68] One ultimate source was identified in Argow's conclusion that, "there is one common origin and God is the Father of everything; He is the Father of <u>all</u> the universes, not just one; Father of <u>all</u> the substances and elements; the Father of all life."[69] Jesus sensed his unification with this totality; Jesus "had a supreme sense of his own consciousness of God and of the identity of himself with God as few others, perhaps no others, ever had before or since."[70] Like Davies and Holmes, Argow criticized the theologians and creed-makers who distorted the universal concept of God with wrong interpretations.[71] Appreciating humanity's growing knowledge and accumulated understanding, Argow complained that the creeds and dogmas of traditional religion were formulated before the new discoveries of modern science.[72] Revering all life, he cherished the common:

> To work that one may live, and to spend less than one earns; to love and nurture a few living things - a shy little plant in a window or an affectionate dog; to thrill at the sight of a morning sunbeam lacing itself through the dinginess of a room; to own and often read a few dear books until they grow as intimate as prayer; to have some understanding friends to whom you never need explain; to be able to live with the memory of deeds done for themselves alone; to be content with homey things - daily bread, daily loves, daily duties - so that you do not have to grasp at the stars for adventure; and then at eventide to voice a simple prayer and know the benediction which comes from honest work blessing tired muscles, while in one's heart there lingers a sense of kinship with Him in whom standeth our life - so to live is to find permanance amid change. 73

Employing the First Amendment freedoms to preach a contemporary universal religion of humanity, Davies, Holmes, and Argow defended "the free mind".

Because very limited scholarly research has focused upon Unitarian history since the Civil War, especially between 1865 and 1934,[74] continued investigation is needed on Davies' sermons collected at Meadville/Lombard Theological School, Holmes' sermons preserved at the Community Church of New York and Union Theological Seminary in New York, and Argow's sermons at Harvard Divinity School. Pending that extended research, a tenative hypothesis might assert with Lecky that

> ...if it be, above all, true Christianity to cultivate a love of truth for its own sake, a spirit of candour and of tolerance towards those with whom we differ - if these be the marks of a true and healthy Christianity, then never since the days of the Apostles has it been so vigorous as at present, and the decline of dogmatic systems and of clerical influence has been a measure if not a cause of its advance. 75

FOOTNOTES

1 Earl Morse Wilbur, "The First Century of the Liberal Movement in American Religion", an address delivered upon the anniversary of the Harvard Divinity School Alumni Association, June 21, 1916, pp. 3-29.

2 Conrad Wright (ed.) Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 3.

3 Clyde L. Manschreck, A History of Christianity (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 521. See also Martin E. Marty, The Infidel: Freethought and American Religion (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1961), pp. 88-105.

4 Sidney E. Mead, "Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America", Church History XXIII (December, 1954), p. 311.

5 William E. Channing, "Spiritual Freedom", The Works of William E. Channing (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1875), p. 174.

6 Conrad Wright, The Liberal Christians (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 23.

7 Irving H. Bartlett (ed.) William Ellery Channing: Unitarian Christianity and Other Essays (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1957), pp. xx-xxv.

8 Theodore Parker, "William Ellery Channing", Theodore Parker: An Anthology ed. Henry Steele Commager (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 81.

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